Members of the American Society of Parasitologists and guests, it is with the utmost pleasure and joy that I introduce Dr. Gerardo Pérez-Ponce de León as the recipient of the 2014 Clark P. Read Mentor Award. On behalf of those who submitted letters supporting his nomination, I thank the committee chaired by Dr. Valerie McKenzie and the Society for recognizing our mentor.

Dr. Pérez-Ponce de León has used his teaching skills to inspire undergraduate and graduate students, who have also found in him an example of dedication to research and mentoring. His indefatigable efforts have served as an example of discipline, a strong work ethic, and determination to pursue goals and attain change. Throughout his career, Dr. Pérez-Ponce de León has influenced the research at the Instituto de Biología of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) by incorporating phylogenetic and quantitative tools that helped in transforming and diversifying the vocation of his institution from a primary repository of collections and refuge for taxonomy into a stronghold of evolutionary thinking. All of these characteristics, in combination with his charming personality, have made an indelible impression on all of his former students.

Dr. Pérez-Ponce de León received his Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Ph.D. degrees from UNAM. As a student he was keen to develop projects around parasites associated with vertebrates in freshwater systems. During this time he cultivated a genuine interest in the evolutionary processes that shaped the interactions among the elements one may encounter in aquatic systems. As a consequence he authored studies in the distribution of parasites in fish, studied the distribution of the apparently ubiquitous Posthodiplostomum minimum in intermediate and definitive hosts, tracked the invasion of the Asian tapeworm in Mexico, and participated in the inventory of parasites of marine fish. The continuation and expansion of his research has resulted in the production of 129 scientific publications. The quality and implications of his work made him the recipient of the Premio Nacional de Investigación en Ciencias Naturales, awarded by the Mexican Academy of Sciences in 2002, and the Henry Baldwin Ward Medal of the American Society of Parasitologists, awarded in 2006. Yet, he still maintains a humble attitude that makes him continue his own education, instruction, and training. Thus, he has used sabbatical leaves to work at the University of Nebraska with Dr. Scott Gardner and the University of California at Davis with Dr. Steve Nadler.

In addition to the basic scientific results derived from his research program, important results also have included the formation of scientists and undergraduate and graduate students who gained research experience working under his direction. Most students working in his lab were soon involved in the inventory of parasites of aquatic and semiaquatic vertebrates in Mexico; several delved into the structure of the parasite communities in basins across the central plateau of Mexico or reconstructed the influences of Neartic and Neotropical elements in the phylogenetic relationships of parasites occurring in the transition zone. All of his trainees were and are exposed to bench and field techniques and challenged to integrate basic notions of parasitology with other disciplines of science.

The inspirational teaching career of Dr. Pérez-Ponce de León started in 1984, when he became a TA for parasitology at UNAM. During subsequent years, he taught specialized courses in invertebrate zoology and parasitological-themed electives. In 1987 he became the instructor of the field biology course “Helminth Parasites of Aquatic Vertebrates,” which was pivotal in the scholarly formation of several of his students. His engaging teaching style and dedicated mentoring has resulted in the training of 11 undergraduates completing research theses, 14 M.S. students, and 6 Ph.D. students, as well as 4 postdoctoral researchers. These individuals are now leading independent groups completing research in various branches of parasitology, ichthyology, and biogeography. They now teach in universities around Mexico and the United States, with 6 securing academic positions at his home institution, and 5 more at other institutions of higher education scattered across Mexico (Table I). Those students staying in his home institution have branched off to different departments and schools to enhance the training and perspectives of future parasitologists. Those in other institutions have diversified the curricula in their home institutions by teaching subjects pertaining to the parasite-host interaction. Since Dr. Pérez-Ponce de León has ventured into the advising of non-parasitologists, some of his former students are teaching other aspects of biology, including biogeography and evolutionary biology.

I consider that his ability to provide a learning atmosphere and knack for making every student feel immersed in the middle of a scientific conversation were key in engaging students in the universal endeavor of doing science. By thoroughly discussing ideas and guiding us to the identification of problems he helped us to enumerate potential alternatives to tests these hypotheses. By doing this, especially with undergraduates, he made us overcome misconceptions and use this knowledge to ask new questions. Consistently, this made us feel part of a scientific dialogue and made us realize that to have something relevant to contribute to this dialogue one needs to show dedication to work and careful analysis.

His teaching style incorporates an extraordinary ability to dissect abstract concepts and convince individuals in their early 20s to work toward pursuing a common goal. Several of these abilities translated into his mentoring style, by helping young people to coordinate and complete small expeditions and complement experiments.

His respectful interaction with students would help us in applying general concepts into parasitological problems. In most